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Agenda item 8

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON ITS THIRTY-EIGHTH SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Djénébou Kaba (Côte d'Ivoire)

PRIORITY THEMES

B. Development: Women in urban areas: population, nutrition and health factors for women in development, including migration, drug consumption and acquired immune deficiency syndrome

11. Many representatives expressed their concern that rapid urbanization was a major challenge for the forthcoming decades. The urban population has been growing two and a half times faster than the rural population, and the urbanization process in developing countries was closely linked with urban poverty, severely affecting women. In some countries, the growth pattern had resulted in changes in the sectoral composition of the economy. For example, light manufacturing accounted for a greater share of gross national product than agriculture, the traditional mainstay of women.

12. Many representatives expressed concern about current trends indicating that increasingly more women than men were single heads of households and that more women were migrating to urban areas. A few representatives stressed that mobility was a prerequisite for women's employment and career opportunities. Thus, such issues as public transport and housing for working women in urban and semi-urban locations should be given more attention. Some representatives emphasized the need for men and women to share all household duties.

13. Some representatives expressed regret that only two paragraphs in the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies were devoted to the issue of women in urban areas. Some representatives expressed their disappointment that the Secretary-General's report did not refer to the issue of international migration of women workers, focusing instead on intra-country migration only. One representative stated that the report omitted the problem of mega-cities which generated a massive flow of men and women seeking jobs. Another representative recalled that at its thirty-fifth session, the Commission had adopted resolution 35/6 entitled "Women migrant workers", in which it had recommended several measures to be undertaken by member States to tackle the problem. She asked to be informed of the follow-up activities of the Secretariat called for in the resolution.

14. The problem of migration, although universal, was more acute in some countries than in others. One non-governmental organization representative stressed the need for cooperative migration strategies.

15. A number of representatives pointed to the issue of AIDS and the risk of greater exposure of women in urban areas to the infection. One representative announced the implementation of a Global Issues Initiative on Population and AIDS within the framework of the official assistance programme to developing countries. The problem of HIV/AIDS was of particular concern because of the challenge of providing proper treatment of those infected. The need for effective preventive educational campaigns, housing and care for the families whose breadwinners were infected, including psychological counselling, was also stressed.

16. Some representatives gave their attention to the socio-economic interdependency between the single rural woman and the urban migrant women in developing countries. Development policies that did not address the problems of urban and rural areas simultaneously often had a negative impact on women, such as forcing rural women to seek income in non-agricultural production.

17. One representative (on behalf of a group of countries) made concrete proposals for development programmes and projects aimed at direct assistance to women in urban slum areas for enhancing their residential environments, bettering their job possibilities and improving both health and education. The representative reported on the success of another project implemented in her country aimed at empowering destitute urban women and training them for participation in community decision-making.

18. Many representatives stated that unless the specific situation of women was taken into account, the impact of urbanization on women's lives would remain negative. A few representatives pointed out that if structural adjustment programmes implied budget cuts in such services as transportation, sanitation, and energy supply, women would be severely affected. One representative suggested that external support agencies could play an important role in making urban development more gender-sensitive.

19. Representatives stated that social policies in developed countries should address the problems of migrant women living in big cities. Urban life, while giving women access to educational and occupational opportunities, had

paradoxically marginalized and impoverished them, exposing them to psychological stress, xenophobia and forced prostitution in extreme cases. Promoting and ensuring the human rights of those women therefore deserved special attention. In order to fully guarantee such rights, women should be much more involved in decision-making in urban planning.

20. Most of the representatives endorsed the recommendations adopted by the seminar on women in urban areas. However, one representative questioned the recommendation that the matter of nutrition should be addressed by Governments, stating that such matters should be the concern of communities.

21. Several representatives of governmental and non-governmental organizations agreed that the root causes of migration should be addressed by creating the necessary favourable conditions for job opportunities in rural areas, thus curbing migration to urban areas.

22. Many representatives agreed that policy-making should be based on a realistic and integrated approach to urban development, including partnership of the public, private and community sectors, involving both men and women.

C. Peace: Measures to eradicate violence against women in the family and society

23. Most representatives welcomed the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, adopted by the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session, as an important first step towards the eradication of violence against women. They also welcomed the decision to establish the post of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and the results of the Vienna Conference on Human Rights, which had recognized that women's human rights were an integral part of human rights in general; consequently, all forms of violence against women should be considered as serious violations of human rights and dealt with at the main human rights forums.

24. Several representatives commented on the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and commended its gender-sensitive approach to human rights. One representative indicated that although women's rights were theoretically enshrined in the universal human rights instruments, specific violation of women's human rights and gender-specific abuses had not been specifically addressed by the instruments. Furthermore, it was pointed out that ratification of the human rights instruments was not enough; a clear gender-sensitive approach to their interpretation and application was necessary, since interpretation of the principles they contained had not ensured equal protection of men's and women's rights.

25. Some representatives stated that the Special Rapporteur had a primary responsibility for the implementation of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and could make a substantial contribution to the monitoring and implementation of the Declaration by properly reporting on abuse and responding to it. The others emphasized that the Commission on the Status of Women had an important part to play in raising awareness of the issues,

monitoring progress and encouraging positive developments until the Fourth World Conference on Women made its recommendations on the matter.

26. Many representatives referred to the steps taken towards closer cooperation between the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Centre for Human Rights, indicated in document E/CN.6/1994/11. In her statement, the representative of the Centre for Human Rights provided an account of the initiatives undertaken. She emphasized the need to provide better protection for women's human rights, to continue exploring better modalities for coordinating the efforts of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Commission on Human Rights.

27. Several representatives stated that the fundamental link between women's inequality and violence should be given more attention. Violence was viewed as a continuum of behaviour involving men's abuse of power over women who had less power, due to their gender-related unequal status in all societies. Many representatives informed the Commission of measures adopted to combat violence against women in their countries such as stricter terms of punishment of perpetrators; legal protection of women and aid to women; support of shelters for battered women; new legislation, particularly in regard to rape, and new procedures for facilitating complaints and the persecution of the perpetrators; training of law enforcement personnel to assist rape victims; modified court procedures and financial compensation to rape victims. It was suggested that an in-depth study of the treatment of those who commit violent crimes against women be made. Among other innovative actions undertaken in order to stop violence against women, the initiative to encourage non-violent men to speak out against such violence and not to excuse the violence of other men was mentioned as part of a community education programme. One representative described the action taken to stop female sexual mutilation. Another representative spoke about a successful survey on the generational cycle of violence, its association with substance abuse, and the reluctance of women to tell about their victimization.

28. The increased understanding of the causes and mechanisms of violence, which had resulted in new approaches and actions by the judiciary and social welfare and health-care institutions, was stressed. Although physical and sexual violence had become visible and were being addressed, the moral and psychological violence resulting from oppression and discrimination remained invisible. Thus, those particular forms of violence should be given more attention by the Commission.

29. The need for cooperation between private organizations, Governments, non-governmental organizations and other relevant institutions and the establishment of interministerial groups to combat violence against women were also mentioned.

30. A few representatives expressed support for the new measures aimed at the prevention of sexual harassment in the Secretariat of the United Nations. While several representatives mentioned the issue of sexual harassment, one representative described in detail the action undertaken to combat and prevent it at the national level in her country.

31. Several representatives commended the recommendations of the 1993 Expert Group Meeting on Measures to Eradicate Violence against Women. One representative suggested that such recommendations could be useful to address violence against women at the national level. Another representative referred to the report on peace (E/CN.6/1994/4) which had focused on measures to combat violence against women and did not consider sufficiently the patterns of relationship between men and women and missed the consideration of various means which would be useful for breaking the cycle of power and abuse which were the key issues in preventing violence.

32. Several representatives expressed their concern over the insufficient attention paid to the abuses of human rights of women in armed conflicts. Reference was made to the crimes against women committed in the territory of the former Yugoslavia and the urgent need to bring the perpetrators before the International Tribunal. The establishment of a special unit in the office of the Prosecutor which would deal mainly with war-related violence against women, including rape and sexual assault, was recommended.

33. The gravity of problems faced by female migrant workers, including violence and physical abuse, was addressed by one representative. She noted the increasing number of women migrating from developing to industrialized countries and described their vulnerability and the difficulties they faced in the receiving countries, such as the low level of accessible jobs and lack of knowledge of the worker's protection mechanisms. She stated that the problem required close cooperation between the countries of emigration and the receiving States as well as continued attention by the United Nations system and other concerned bodies. She recalled the various relevant resolutions adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-seventh session and by the General Assembly at its forty-seventh by which the Secretary-General was requested to prepare a report on the matter for submission to the Commission at its thirty-eighth session.